

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P 251130Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7145

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 682

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON MINISTER RALLIS

1. AS PART OF A ROUND OF CALLS I HAVE BEEN MAKING ON KEY MINISTERS OF THE GOG, I PAID A COURTESY CALL JANUARY 24 ON GEORGE RALLIS, MINISTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY OUR NEWLY-ARRIVED POLITICAL COUNSELOR GEORGE BARBIS. RALLIS IS A VERY CLOSE ADVISOR AND CONFIDANT OF PM CARAMANLIS, AND ONE OF THE 3-4 MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE IN THE GOG. FOR THESE REASONS I BELIEVE HIS REMARKS WILL BE OF INTEREST TO THE DEPARTMENT. DURING OUR HALF-HOUR MEETING RALLIS COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON US-GREEK RELATIONS, THE AEGEAN ISSUE, PM CARAMANLIS, AND THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS FACING THE GOG. THE MINISTER WAS FRIENDLY AND FORTHRIGHT IN HIS REMARKS.

2. US-GREEK RALTIONS. RALLIS AGREED WITH THE POINT I MADE THAT THE BASIC INTERESTS OF GREECE LIE IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE U.S. #-\$. -\$.8 5-(3 (CLEARLY ALLUDING TO THE JUNTA PERIOD AND THE CYPRUS ISSUE) AND IMPROVEMENT IN OUR RELATIONS DEPENDED ON CHANGES IN U.S. POLICY. HE SAID THE U.S. SHOULD BE IMPARTIAL AS BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY. WHEN I REBUTTED THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT AND SAID THAT WE HAD BEEN IMPARTIAL HE SAID THIS WAS NOT THE IMPRESSION THE GREEK PEOPLE HAD AND IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO CONVINCE THEM OTHERWISE.

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3. CONCEDED THAT THE U.S., AND PARTICULARLY THE ECRETARY,

WERE WORKING HARD TO BE HELPFUL ON THE CYPRUS ISSUE, RALLIS SAID THE U.S. WAS LIKE A COW THAT GAVE MILK AND THEN KICKED OVER THE BUCKET. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS, HE SAID, WAS THE NEWS FRIDAY MORNING THAT THE USG PLANNED TO SELL \$230 MILLION WORTH OF TANKS TO TURKEY. I EXPLAINED TO RALLIS WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN THE DOD NOTIFICATION TO THE SENATE OF THE USG PLAN TO SELL \$230 MILLION WORTH OF KITS TO MODERNIZE SOME TURKISH TANKS. I SAID THIS MATTER APPEARED TO ME TO HAVE BEEN HANDLED IN A ROUTINE FASION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES. I THEN EXPLAINED TO HIM THE PROVISIONS OF THE NELSON AMENDMENT TO MILITARY AID LEGISLATION. RALLIS POINTED OUT THAT REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GREEK PEOPLE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THIS US ACTION WHICH THEY WOULD VIEW AS PARTIAL TO TURKEY.

4. THE AEGEAN ISSUE. RALLIS SAID HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE ISSUE COULD BE RESOLVED PEACEFULLY BUT THE TURKS MUST REALIZE THAT IF THEY ARE PROVIKED THE GREEKS MUST FIGHT REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME. CARAMANLIS WOULD NOT LAST 24 HOURS IF HE FAILED TO REACT TO A TURKISH PROVOCATION IN THE AEGEAN AND IN SUCH AN EVENTUALITY HIS FALL WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY CHAOS IN GREECE. "FACE" WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AS IT WAS IN THE FAR EAST, HE ADDED. I REASSURED RALLIS THAT WE HAD NO EVIDENCE INDICATING THAT THE TURKS INTENDED TO MAKE ANY AGGRESSIVE MOVES IN THE AEGEAN. I SAID WE WOULD WANT TO DO EVERYTHING WE COULD TO PREVENT HOSITILITIES, WHICH WOULD BE A DISASTROUS DEVELOPMENT, FROM BREAKING OUT BETWEEN OUR TWO ALLIES. I TOLD RALLIS I HAD JUST RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT ON THIS VERY QUESTION AND WOULD BE DISCUSSING THIS MATTER LATER FRIDAY NIGHT WITH FM BITSIOS. RALLIS DID NOT PURSUE THE MATTER FURTHER.

4. CARAMANLIS. IN REPLY TO MY COMMENT THAT HE HAD BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD CARAMANLIS BECOME PRESIDENT, RALLIS SAID CARAMANLIS HAS TO REMAIN AS PRIME MINISTER. HE SAID CARAMANLIS WAS THE ONLY PERSON WHO COULD HAVE HANDLED THE TRANSITION FROM THE DICTATORSHIP TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT. HE IS STILL NEEDED ON

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A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS GREECE FACES, AND NOT TO BE AVAILABLE ONLY IN EVENT OF EMERGENCY WHICH WOULD BE THE CASE WERE HE PRESIDENT.

6. INTERNAL PROBLEMS. RALLIS LISTED THE FOLLOWING AS KEY INTERNAL PROBLEMS THE GOG MUST COPE WITH: (1) THE ROYALISTS WHO ARE EMBITTERED OVER THE RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM. HE HIMSELF, HE SAID, HAD VOTED FOR THE MONARCHY BUT HE KNEW

WHAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE AND HAD TOLD CARAMANLIS: (2) MILITANT STUDENTS WHO, THOUGH A SMALL GROUP, WERE STIRRING THINGS UP. INTERESTINGLY, HE DESCRIBED ANDREAS AS DEPASSE AS A MILITANT IN COMPARISON: (3) GREEK REFUGEES BEHIND THE "IRON CURTAIN" WAS THE THIRD INTERNAL PROBLEM RALLIS MENTIONED. HE SAID THERE WAS NO PROBLEM RIGHT NOW WITH THOSE IN YUGOSLAVIA BUT THE ONES CONCERNED WERE IN EAST GERMANY, HUNGARY, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE SOVIET UNION AND SOME IN ROMANIA. THE COMMUNISTS HERE WERE PRESSING FOR THE GOG TO PERMIT ALL THESE REFUGEES TO RETURN. THE GOG COULD NOT AGREE TO THIS BUT AT MOST COULD GO ALONG WITH ALLOWING AROUND 2,000 A YEAR TO RETURN.

7. RALLIS INDICATED THAT HE IS NOT INVOLVED IN THE QUESTION OF GREEK SECURITY RELATIONS WITH THE US AND NATO.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, AGEAN SEA, POLITICAL SITUATION, MILITARY SALES, FORM OF GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS00682
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750028-1112
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750120/aaaaarwv.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 APR 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <29 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON MINISTER RALLIS
TAGS: PFOR, GR, US, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006